



## NEWSBREAK

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### What's New?

#### **Cohort 2 TIF Grantees and TWG Members Convene in Two Separate Meetings to Discuss Technical Assistance and Establish Next Steps for CECR**

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) met with the Cohort 2 Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees in Washington, D.C., on September 17 and 18, 2007. Grantees received a warm welcome from Kerri Briggs, Assistant Secretary, and Amanda Farris, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Strategic Initiatives for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. The meeting began with a presentation focused on communications and stakeholder engagement. CECR staff shared a sample communications plan with the grantees and provided tips on how to design and implement a successful plan. Grantees then met with CECR staff to develop the initial pieces of a

customized technical assistance plan to support the first year of implementation. During the meeting, CECR staff shared tips on designing a robust data system to support project goals and also engaged TIF grantees in an interactive session to demonstrate the various CECR Web-based guides and tools. One general session offered guidance on project goal setting and monitoring while another focused on the considerations necessary for building a value-added model.

On September 19, 2007, U.S. Department of Education representatives along with CECR staff met with the CECR Technical Working Group (TWG), to discuss accomplishments and establish next steps for CECR. The TWG consists of a group of educator compensation reform experts from around the country who provide strategic direction to CECR. The meeting included structured discussions on grantee technical assistance, monitoring, tool development, and the national TIF program evaluation.

## Hot Off the Press

### **Getting the Facts Straight on Performance Pay in the Proposed Draft of Title II of NCLB**—*Center for American Progress*, October 1, 2007

[http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/09/teacher\\_factcheck.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/09/teacher_factcheck.html)

*This article discusses claims and facts regarding teacher evaluation and performance pay proposals for possible inclusion in the reauthorization of NCLB.*

### **Districts Will Offer Pay for Performance**—*The Tennessean*, September 28, 2007

<http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200770928106>

*Districts in Tennessee will offer bonuses to top-performing teachers as well as those who teach in hard-to-staff schools or teach particular subjects.*

### **Escambia Teacher Merit-Pay Plan OK'd**—*Pensacola News Journal*, September 27, 2007

<http://www.pensacolanewsjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070927/NEWS01/709270329/1006>

*A Florida school board unanimously approved a merit-pay plan supported by 70 percent of the district's voting teachers. The plan includes "things teachers can influence," according to the president of the Escambia Education Association.*

### **Teacher Merit Plan Approved**—*Hernando Today*, September 27, 2007

<http://www.hernandotoday.com/MGBGG8Q147F.html>

*A pay-for-performance plan primarily based on teachers' test scores was narrowly approved in Hernando County, Florida.*

## Grantee Spotlight: Northern New Mexico Performance-Based Compensation Program

The Northern New Mexico Performance-Based Compensation Program (NNMPBCP) focuses on four rural school districts: Española, Springer, Cimarron, and Des Moines. The program builds on state legislation designed to raise teacher salaries and create a direct link between salaries and student achievement. NNMPBCP also focuses on capacity building and professional development to increase student achievement.

Teacher and principal compensation reform is not a new concept for the state. The 2003 New Mexico Public School Reforms Act raised teacher salaries by mandating minimum salaries for teachers (based on level of certification) and requiring the use of principal evaluations. Likewise, current practices for evaluating and compensating New Mexico school principals are under review.

In addition, New Mexico participates in the [Baldrige in Education](#) initiative, a national partnership that aims to improve education through enhanced organizational performance and a

continuous improvement framework. NNMPBCP incorporates the Baldrige in Education initiative as appropriate in its implementation efforts.

### **What need is the project trying to address?**

Each of the districts participating in NNMPBCP faces low student-achievement scores, increasing dropout rates, and difficulty recruiting high-quality teachers. These issues are compounded by the isolation and poverty of the rural districts participating in NNMPBCP and the unique educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. NNMPBCP addresses these issues by focusing on teacher recruitment and retention strategies in conjunction with existing state efforts to increase teacher salaries.

In 2005, the percentages of New Mexico students in Grade 8 scoring at or above proficient levels on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments for mathematics, reading, and science were 14 percent, 19 percent, and 18 percent respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

New Mexico also has a significant need for highly qualified teachers. In 2006, approximately 55 percent of New Mexico students in Grades 7–12 were taught by teachers without a major in the subject they teach, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2006).

According to the Education Trust (Peske & Haycock, 2006), students in high-poverty districts are less likely to be taught by high-quality teachers; instead, they are more likely to be taught by novice or out-of-field teachers. The Rural School and Community Trust (2005) indicates that New Mexico faces a significant rural education challenge and has some of the highest levels of rural poverty.

### **What are the goals of the project?**

The primary goal of the project is to develop a teacher and principal performance-based compensation system. This system will help the four high-need districts recruit highly effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools and subjects as well as reward teachers and principals who raise student achievement.

NNMPBCP aims to establish ongoing support for the performance-based compensation system from a variety of education stakeholders in the state, differentiate levels of compensation to target recruitment into specific rural schools and subject areas, and build the capacity of both teachers and principals to raise student achievement through professional development and system support structures.

### **What are the incentives?**

NNMPBCP offers incentives to the following: (1) all personnel for schoolwide achievement gains, (2) individual teachers for classroom achievement gains, and (3) teachers who make student achievement gains in high-need schools and subject areas. In addition to student

achievement, NNMPBCP offers incentives to personnel for recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers in high-need areas and to teachers and principals as a part of the Baldrige in Education initiative. Principals also may earn incentives by meeting goals set by the New Mexico Public Education Department's Educational Plan for Student Success, leading teams that conduct teacher evaluations, and receiving high ratings from teachers under their supervision.

### **What are the strengths of the project?**

The project has several strengths. First, the project included discussions with teachers and principals in the design of the performance-based compensation process and professional development components during the first year of implementation. This approach allowed key stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process and also fostered the development of leadership teams at each school site representing teachers from all grade levels and related service areas.

A second strength of the program is data management. The state of New Mexico is currently implementing a new data management system, Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS), which will provide disaggregated data more frequently to support the creation of a system designed to track student success.

Third, in order to measure the effectiveness of program implementation, an external team of researchers from Wexford Inc. will evaluate NNMPBCP. The evaluators will review NNMPBCP based on program management and structure, quality, effectiveness in meeting program goals, and the impact of program services. The external evaluation will allow NNMPBCP to continuously improve the program throughout its implementation.

### **What are the challenges of the project?**

The implementation of pay-for-performance systems is a complex process. NNMPBCP's greatest challenge involves systematic coordination across four distinct school districts. In order to facilitate a coordinated approach, NNMPBCP relies on leadership teams operating at each school within each of the four districts. This design intends to foster ongoing communication and a "bottoms-up" approach. NNMPBCP will provide useful information to help illuminate the complexities of implementing performance-based pay across diverse districts and the ability of the approach to support project sustainability.

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The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) was awarded to Westat—in partnership with Learning Point Associates, Synergy Enterprises Inc., Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin—by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2006.

The primary purpose of CECR is to support the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees with their implementation efforts through the provision of ongoing technical assistance and the development and dissemination of timely resources. CECR also is charged with raising national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation through this newsletter, a Web-based clearinghouse, and other outreach activities. We look forward to an exciting partnership with the TIF grantees as we embark together on blazing a new path for education reform.

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